6. Empirics II – Interests
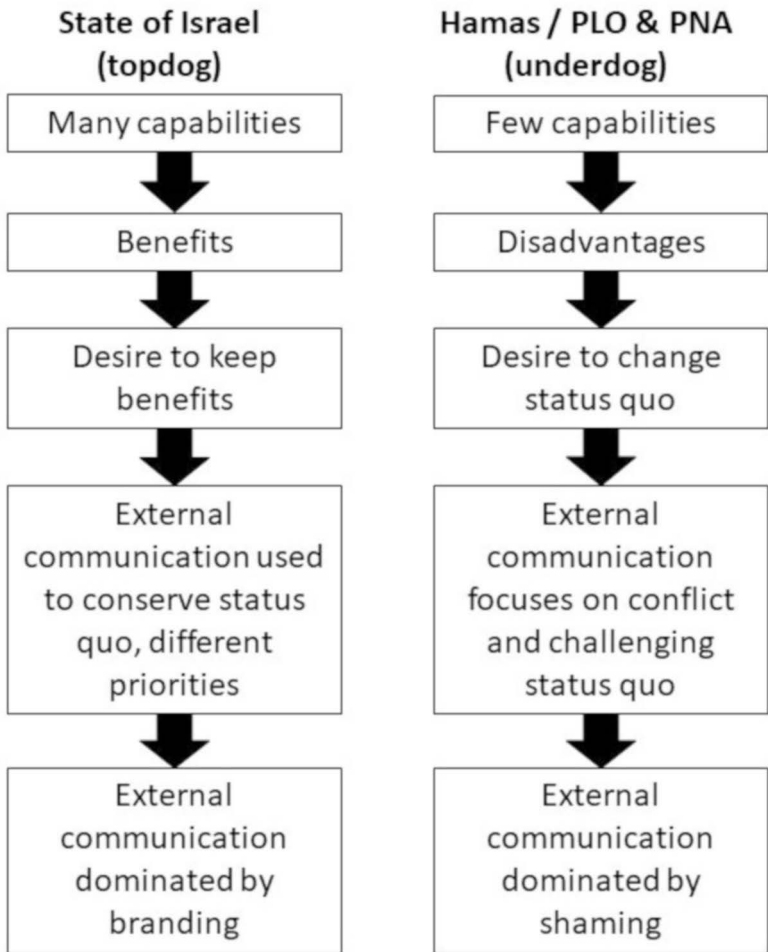
The following chapter demonstrates, using the conflict in Israel and Palestine as a case study, that an asymmetric conflict structure shapes divergent interests of the conflict parties involved in the conflict and that the divergent interests, in turn, influence the selection of strategies of external communication of the conflict parties:

The Palestinian side has few capabilities (cf. section 4.1.2.). Consequently, the conflict structure imposes a series of disadvantages on them: They have lesser territorial and governmental control than the Israeli side, much less wealth and recognition, as well as worse access to the international community (section 6.1.1.). Having many disadvantages, the Palestinian side is strongly dissatisfied with the status quo of the conflict. The conflict and challenging the status quo (section 6.1.2.) are, therefore, the single priorities for their external communication (section 6.1.3.). As shaming is the strategy of external communication that is most suitable to challenge the status quo and to focus on the conflict, the Palestinian side chooses a shaming-dominated strategy of external communication (section 6.1.4., cf. also the results presented in chapter 5).

The Israeli side, in contrast, has many capabilities (cf. section 4.1.2.). Consequently, the conflict structure offers for them benefits, rather than disadvantages: They can profit, unlike their Palestinian counterparts, from benefits such as political and military control, economic wealth and good connections with powerful nations of the international community (section 6.1.1.). The Israeli side is, for this reason, comparatively satisfied with the status quo, as it can enjoy various benefits from having a lot of capabilities. It is, therefore, interested in defending these privileges (section 6.1.2.). Instead of focusing only on the conflict, for this reason, Israel aims to safeguard its various benefits with its external communication. For example, it tries to use its external communication to safeguard and foster the Israeli economy and Israel's international status (section 6.1.3.). As branding is the strategy of external communication that is most suitable to showcase and promote, safeguard and foster Israel's not conflict-related strengths, the Israeli side chooses a branding-dominated strategy of external communication (section 6.1.4., cf. also the results presented in chapter 5).

Figure 16: Overview – The prioritization pathway in the conflict in Israel and Palestine

State of Israel (topdog)	Hamas / PLO & PNA (underdog)
Many capabilities	Few capabilities
Benefits	Disadvantages
Desire to keep benefits	Desire to change status quo
External communication used to conserve status quo, different priorities	External communication focuses on conflict and challenging status quo
External communication dominated by branding	External communication dominated by shaming

After demonstrating how the distribution of capabilities in general shapes the interests of the conflict parties and, in this way, the selection of external communication strategies (section 6.1.), additionally, the impact of the distribution of economic & financial capabilities (section 6.2.) and the distribution of social/institutional capabilities (section 6.3.) on the interests of the conflict parties and on the selection of external communication strategies are explored in detail.

6.1   General pattern – Interests resulting from the distribution of capabilities

6.1.1   Benefits & disadvantages resulting from the distribution of capabilities

Having few capabilities imposes disadvantages on the Palestinian side as underdogs. Having many capabilities, in contrast, offers benefits for the Israeli side as the topdog:

Disadvantages for the Palestinian side

The Palestinian actors have transversally significantly fewer capabilities (cf. section 4.1.2.). Having only few capabilities means that the conflict structure offers for them severe disadvantages and no

benefits for the Palestinian side. A consequence of having fewer military capabilities is that they enjoy lesser territorial and governmental control. While Hamas controls the Gaza Strip (Brown 2012: 1) and the PLO & the PNA parts of the West Bank, large parts of the West Bank remain controlled by Israel (OCHA 2019) and Israel controls the access to the Gaza Strip by air, sea and (together with Egypt) by land (Shlaim 2009). A consequence of having fewer economic & financial capabilities is that the Palestinian side enjoys less wealth than the Israeli side as topdog. While the Israeli economy is comparatively developed, the Palestinian economy is still confronted with a lot of challenges and, as the Palestinian side has less military control, they are more aggrieved by the implications of the conflict (UNSCO 2017: 2; Office of the Quartet 2018; Berzak 2013: 109). While the standard of living is comparatively high in Israel, poverty and unemployment are significantly higher in the Palestinian territories (UNDP 2016). And having less social/institutional capabilities means for the Palestinian side a lack of international recognition. While held out in prospect, a fully recognized statehood remains denied to the Palestinians (cf. e.g. Reuters 31.12.2014; Times of Israel 15.01.2019). Hamas lacks recognition even more and is listed in many countries as a terror organization.[1]

Benefits for the Israeli side

As shown in section 4.1.2., in comparison to the Palestinian side the State of Israel has transversally significantly more capabilities. Having these capabilities offers the Israeli side a series of benefits: Having one of the strongest and best-trained

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1   Most notably, the United States (US Department of State – Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism 2018) and the European Union (Council of the European Union (27.01.2017): Council Decision (CFSP) 2017/154) have deemed Hamas as a whole as a terror organization and have, therefore, imposed sanctions against the group.

armies in the world (IISS 2017: 382) and, therefore, much more military capabilities than the Palestinian side gives the Israeli government more political power and control in the conflict region, thus making it possible to control large areas of Palestinian territory (OCHA 2019). Having more economic & financial capabilities and, therefore, a stronger economy, makes Israel a relatively wealthy country and allows the Israeli population to enjoy a comparatively high standard of living (UNDP 2016; cf. also sections 4.1.2.2. and 6.2.1.). Having more social/institutional capabilities, furthermore, gives them a high social status in the international community: Israel is recognized as a full member of the United Nations and has good connections with powerful nations of the international community like for example the United States. From those allies it receives a lot of support (Mearsheimer & Walt 2006: 30ff.; cf. also sections 4.1.2.3. and 6.3.1.) as well as.

6.1.2   (Dis)satisfaction with the status quo

The Palestinian side has a strong desire to overcome the status quo, which imposes disadvantages on them. The Israeli side, in contrast, is comparatively satisfied with the status quo and has the desire to keep the benefits the status quo provides:

Dissatisfaction of the Palestinian side with the status quo

The disadvantages described in section 6.1.1., such as the low level of territorial control, comparative poverty and a lack of international recognition, are all reasons for the Palestinian actors as less powerful conflict parties of the asymmetric conflict to be dissatisfied with the status quo. Indeed, this dissatisfaction is expressed in the external communication on social media and has also been expressed by the interviewed officials that are in charge of the official Palestinian social media channels. The disparity fuels a strong feeling of injustice, not only within the Palestinian leadership and administration but also within the Palestinian population in general. The data of the Global Indicators Database of the Pew Research Center shows also a high level of dissatisfaction amongst the Palestinian population. Being asked the question "How satisfied are you with your country's direction?" in 2014 only 15% of all interviewees in the Palestinian Territories were satisfied with the direction of their country, a value comparable with the values of other countries with a severe economic and/or political crisis. Whilst the levels of satisfaction have seen certain fluctuations across the years, similarly low levels of satisfaction amongst the Palestinian population could be observed in the previous years in which the survey was conducted as well (Pew Research Center 2014). The dissatisfaction with the status quo is also particularly high due to the high visibility of the conflict for the Pales-

tinian population (including the administration[2]) in their daily lives. Especially, the security wall within Palestinian territory, the regulation of travel, checkpoints, raids and patrols carried out by Israeli military and security forces make the conflict particularly visible for the Palestinian population. Possibly one of the most drastic indications of the Palestinian dissatisfaction, and partially even disillusion, is a particularly high willingness to sacrifice (cf. e.g. Holt 2018).

The high dissatisfaction fuels a strong desire to overcome the status quo, amongst Palestinian elites as well as the general population. The Palestinian side, therefore, has a strong interest to initiate a challenge against the status quo (as predicted theoretically by Ordóñez 2017: 53; Paul 1994: 129; Geller 2000: 89[3]; Daase 1999: 94): The Palestinian side wants to take over full political and military control over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Some radical factions even have the desire to control the territory of the State of Israel as well. The Palestinians want to enjoy a level of wealth that is, at least, similar to the one Israel enjoys at the moment. They also want to finally be a fully recognized Palestinian state. On the one hand, the desire is a political desire, which is the urge to overcome a power-politically (from a perspective of relative power as well as from a perspective of absolute power) disadvantageous status quo. On the other hand, (from a perspective of individual everyday needs), the high levels of dissatisfaction within the population impose domestic pressure on the leadership to ensure that overcoming the status quo becomes a priority. Consequentially, being a core interest and desire, the conflict and its (perceived) injustices for the Palestinians and the demand to overcome the deficits of the status quo are made up by the Palestinian conflict parties to be the single number one priority of their external communication as well.[4]

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2   Cf. e.g. the statement of Saeb Erikat, a senior negotiator of the PLO, on BR B5 Aktuell (24.12.2018: from 15:40 min) (in contrast to the Israeli satisfaction, expressed in the same radio broadcast later by Michael Oren (18:18 min)) or the various complaints Palestinian officials expressed in the interviews conducted for this study (cf. e.g. PLO MA: 121).

3   Geller, however, focuses only on (unequal) state actors (Geller 2000).

4   This expectation fits well to the observations of social psychologists examining the interactions and communicative behavior of the participants of encounters involving participants from both sides of the asymmetric conflict, the Israeli and the Arab/Palestinian side: When examining encounters of teachers from both sides of the conflict, Ifat Maoz observed that the two sides showed interest in different topics. The Israeli side (as topdog) was dominant when the discussions were focusing on educational, not conflict-related topics, while the Arab/Palestinian side in this case tended to be more passive. In contrast, when focusing on the conflict, the Arab/Palestinian side (as the underdog) became dominant (Maoz 2000: 266ff.). Another study of Maoz shows that in general encounters using a "confrontational" approach, where typically the discussion focuses on the conflict, participants from the Arab/Palestinian side are more dominant than in encounters using a coexistence approach, which focuses less on the conflict (Maoz 2011: 118ff.).

Satisfaction of the Israeli side with the status quo

Enjoying all the benefits described in section 6.1.1., such as a high level of political and territorial control, economic wealth and a comparatively high level of international recognition, makes the status quo for the Israeli side as the topdog (despite the experience of occasional violence and the high monetary costs of the conflict in the form of high expenditures for military and defense) much more acceptable and convenient than for their underdog opponents, both from a power-political perspective and the perspective of the needs of the population. Indeed, the Israeli population is much more satisfied with the status quo, as the data from the Global Indicators Database of the Pew Research Center show. Being asked the question "How satisfied are you with your country's direction?" in 2014 49% of all interviewed Israelis answered that they were satisfied with the direction of their country, a comparatively high value, higher for example than the levels of satisfaction in the UK and the USA and much higher than the 15% on the Palestinian side who gave this answer. While the levels of satisfaction have certain fluctuations across the years, a similar ratio between the levels of satisfaction of the Israeli and the Palestinian side could be observed across all of the years (Pew Research Center 2014). A reason for the lower level of dissatisfaction with the status quo might also be that the visibility of the conflict (at least in routine times) is comparatively low for the Israeli population. Despite occasional rocket and terror attacks, partially heavily weaponized security forces in public (a scene which, since the terror attacks of groups such as Al Qaeda and Daesh, however, is common in European capitals such as Paris or Brussels as well) and the comprehensive military service, which is obligatory for women and men, the conflict is much less visible within the actual territory of the State of Israel, where the population can live a life without major limitations caused by the conflict most of the time.

The majority of the political leadership of the State of Israel has also arranged itself to work with the status quo. The political leadership has shown no serious efforts to overcome the status quo over the last years. The governments led by the current Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have conserved the status quo.[5] Whilst avoiding escalation, Netanyahu and his governments have not considered conflict resolution and peace negotiations to be a priority,[6] though the Oslo Accords

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[5]   The assessment that Prime Minister Netanyahu and his policies have contributed to conserving the status quo is shared by Israeli (e.g. Globes 27.09.2018), rather Pro-Palestinian (e.g. the Israeli but very critical +972 Magazine 30.10.2014) and international sources (e.g. BR B5 Aktuell 24.12.2018: 18:18 min).

[6]   Cf. e.g. BR B5 Aktuell (24.12.2018: min 17:30) Michael Oren (former Israeli ambassador to the USA, member of the Knesset for the Kulanu party and Deputy Minister in the Israeli Prime Minister's Office) in a radio interview arguing that peace negotiations are neither a priority for the Israeli government nor for the Israeli population, quoting polls that peace negotiations are only for 4% of the Israeli population an important issue.

would actually require further actions (Foreign Policy 13.09.2018). Some news outlets have even given Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, the nickname "Mr. Status Quo" (e.g. Haaretz 27.09.2014; Foreign Policy 10.11.2015). The status quo approach proved to also be successful in domestic politics. Since 2009 Netanyahu could convince the Israeli mainstream with this strategy and win with his Likud party since 2009 four elections in a row (2009, 2013, 2015 & 2019)[7] and has since served as Prime Minister (despite being confronted with corruption scandals and relying on various coalition partners with partially strong interests of their own)[8]. As of June 2019, this makes Netanyahu the second-longest serving Prime Minister of the State of Israel, only slightly surpassed by David Ben-Gurion, Israel's founding father and national hero (Knesset 2017; i24News 05.02.2019).[9]

In conclusion, in contrast to their underdog opponents, being comparatively satisfied with the status quo, Israel as the topdog has an interest in keeping the status quo (as was expected also theoretically by Gallo & Marzano 2009: 6; Wirtz 2012: 9; Daase 1999: 94). Having many capabilities means that the Israeli side can profit from the related benefits. Enjoying benefits, however, also mean that the Israeli side, as the topdog, has something to lose. This places Israel in the position of a challenged actor. For this reason, the Israeli side has an interest in defending and maintaining (or, if possible, even expanding) these privileges.[10] As it will be shown in sections 6.2. and 6.3., Israel's privileges resulting from its high economic & financial status and its high social/institutional status tend to be especially vulnerable and need to be defended. Having to take care of these privileges means also that, in contrast to their underdog opponents, the Israeli side also has other topics that matter to them besides the conflict. This does not mean that the conflict is not an important topic for the Israeli side at all. As mentioned, the conflict can also be experienced by the Israeli population (especially during the extensive military service, in the border region and in the form of the strong presence of heavenly armed soldiers and security forces in the public) and, it does remain a relevant topic for the Israeli side. As it, however, is not as omnipresent for the Israeli side than it is for the Palestinian side and a comparatively normal and secure life remains possible within the area of the State of Israel, for the Israeli side the conflict is by far not the

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7 For the historical voting results cf. IPU 2013 or Knesset 2019.

8 Cf. Reuters 14.02.2019.

9 If still in office, Netanyahu will tie Gurion on the 16th of July 2019. (Update: As of 30.12.2020, Netanyahu is still the Prime Minister of Israel. This makes him the longest-serving Prime Minister of Israel. While it proofed to be difficult to form a stable governing coalition after the elections in April 2019 and snap elections were held in September 2019 and March 2020, Natanyahu's Likud Party remained the strongest party in the elections in April 2019 and 2020. Source: https://main.knesset.gov.il/en/mk/pages/elections.aspx, accessed on: 30.12.2020).

10 Indeed, the fear of losses on the Israeli side as topdog has been identified as a key obstacle for conflict resolution in the conflict in Israel and Palestine (Haaretz 04.07.2014; Shalit 1994).

only topic and not even necessarily the priority number one. Quite the opposite, needing to take care of other issues as well safeguarding its status and the related privileges, the country needs to focus on other important topics such as fostering its economic and diplomatic relations.[11]

6.1.3   The selection of strategies of external communication based on interests in the conflict in Israel and Palestine

Having the desire to overcome the status quo, the Palestinian conflict parties adapt their external communication in a way serving this purpose: They feature the conflict in their external communication as the single most important topic, emphasizing the severity and uniqueness of the conflict. The Israeli side, in contrast, profiting from benefits and, therefore, having the desire to keep these benefits and to conserve the status quo adapts their external communication to these very different interests: The Israeli side tries to feature its achievements and to sideline and normalize the conflict.

Palestine – The conflict as the single number one priority topic and securitization of the conflict

As the biggest interest and, the by far biggest priority, of the Palestinian side is to overcome the status quo and the limitations and disadvantages which result from being the underdog in an asymmetric conflict, the Palestinian conflict parties also adapt their external communication in a way that best serves this purpose: To attract as much attention as possible for their core cause they focus their external communication on the conflict, criticizing their opponent Israel and the negative implications of Israeli actions on the Palestinian side. No other topic is perceived as equally important as the conflict for the Palestinian side – criticizing Israel and its actions are dedicated far more attention than any other topic. By raising awareness for this topic, the Palestinian side aims to stimulate international pressure on the Israeli side, thus overcoming the status quo.

The following statements from the interviews conducted with Palestinian practitioners demonstrate vividly that their selection of external communication is, indeed, based on a corresponding prioritization and that this is justified by the negative implications of the conflict for the Palestinian population:

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11   For the Israeli population the conflict is less visible. Therefore, also the Israeli government can expect lower domestic pressure to focus exclusively on the topic. Indeed, Halabi and Sonnenschein argue that it is even uncomfortable for the Israeli population to think and discuss about the conflict, as doing so might raise issues resulting from the position of dominance challenging their positive self-image (Halabi & Sonnenschein 2004: 380).

Reporting on the conflict and the negative implications on the Palestinians such as the human rights violations (or alleged violations) are perceived by the practitioners as the absolute priority, as these aspects persistently and immediately affect the life of the Palestinian population. A media advisor of the PLO e.g. argues: "Human rights violations infiltrate every part of our life. Whether it's the amount of water we have, whether it's the ability to move around, whether it's finding adequate jobs because the economy's being destroyed. That's the message, that is a human message and that's consistent" (PLO MA: 94).

The option to not to refer to the conflict and the problems resulting from the conflict in the Palestinian external communication, in contrast, is described by the practitioners, such as e.g. the person in charge of the Palestinian Mission to the United Kingdom's social media work, as out of touch with the problems in the real world and grotesque. They even compare the option not to report about the conflict (or not that much) with a story attributed to the French queen Marie Antoinette. Allegedly whilst the population was demanding bread to have something to eat, during the times of the French Revolution the queen asked, why they did not simply eat cake instead. Not focusing on the conflict would be like to imitate the alleged behavior of the French queen: "it's like, 'Let them eat cake'. It's like, you know, in the French Revolution when Marie Antoinette said … 'They want bread' … 'Oh, let them eat cake.'" (Pal UK: 123).

Whilst the Palestinian side would also have nice achievements to show off, such as their tradition and culture, against the backdrop of the disadvantages and the resulting desire to overcome the status quo of the Palestinian side, to promote these achievements is simply not deemed as being as equally important by the Palestinian practitioners:

The person in charge of the Palestinian Mission in the United Kingdom's social media work argues: "It's like this idea that you can't say, look how wonderful we are, look, we can sing and dance and we can make nice food. And we can do these wonderful rap face-offs [and have own Palestinian …] But when, in fact, the basic things are being torn away from us, day in, day out, and you're under occupation, children are being arrested, you know what I mean, in a sense of the authenticity of yeah, you can have a strategy to … But it's this idea of, if you're hungry, you've got to shout about it. If you haven't got your basic human rights, you've got to make that known. And that's why, I suppose, all these resistance groups use that, because they're saying there is an injustice here. You can't mask that. The people who have the power, who have the money, yes, have also time to do theater, to make music, and to make wonderful videos about how wonderful they are. Again, I think it's linked back. It's not just about immediate issue, it's linked back to key political and also, economic issues. It's a product" (Pal UK: 202-203).

Similarly, the person in charge of the Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations' social media work in New York City argues that whilst the mission

occasionally hosts events offering the opportunity to take nice pictures which could be used for promoting the Palestinian culture, such as exhibitions with Palestinian crafts or a tasting with Palestinian chocolate, from her point of view this type of message simply is not a priority, as reporting about (alleged) Israeli human rights violations is perceived by her to be much more relevant and urgent. Weighing in on the importance of the different types of message content, the external communication of the mission, therefore, focuses on the latter: "We would love to have chocolate every day, every even, but I think you have to weigh ... At the end of the day the gravity of the situation and the reality is, your people are suffering so you can't post food pictures every day, because that ... You have a goal and that's to not let these people suffer the way that they are. That's what the work really revolves around and then the few times that we are able to celebrate the culture, we obviously do it too and it's great to share but it can't be most of your work" (Pal UN: 123).

Focusing on the conflict and in this way internationally increasing the awareness for the negative implications of the conflict for the Palestinian population, which without the Palestinian external communication often remain invisible and ununderstood, is perceived by the Palestinian practitioners as the best way to challenge the status quo (PLO MA: 119; similar: Pal UK: 123). To maximize the impact of their conflict-focused external communication for challenging the status quo the Palestinian conflict parties securitize the conflict by highlighting the crisis and the singularity, severity and omnipresence[12] of the conflict, thus emphasizing that it is highly urgent and necessary that the international community intervenes. To achieve this securitizing effect the Palestinian conflict parties avoid using "normalizing" language (PLO MA: 119). Even in the posts in which something positive is described the positive issue is typically framed as an expression of "resilience": Palestine is able to achieve all of this "despite" the conditions of the occupation and the conflict, and not "because of" (PLO MA: 119).

Israel – Featuring topics of interests beyond the conflict and normalization of the conflict

As the Israeli side, in contrast to the Palestinian side, is comparatively satisfied with the status quo and is mostly interested in keeping the benefits the status quo provides Israel as topdog, the Israeli practitioners adapt their external communication in a way which best serves this purpose: External communication can be

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12   The crisis is perceived and portrayed by the Palestinian side as continuous. In an interview with the Italian journalist Francesca Borri the leader of Hamas in the Gaza Strip, Yahya Sinwar, e.g. argues: "it's not that there is a war at some point, and on the other days we have peace instead. We are always under occupation, it's a daily aggression. It's just of varying intensity" (Ynet 05.10.2018).

used to help foster economic and social/institutional relationships[13] and in this way to conserve (or even enhance) the benefits which result from these relationships: economic wealth and a high international status, in particular. Focusing too much on the conflict would overshadow or even undermine these efforts.[14] Consequently, the external communication on the Israeli side does not focus exclusively on the conflict but deals with these other priorities as well so as to keep its existing benefits:

Being portrayed and being perceived exclusively from the perspective of the conflict is perceived by the Israeli practitioners as very disadvantageous, as such a focus would overshadow Israel's achievements such as, for instance, its good economic performance and diplomatic relations. As most of the media reporting is already dominated by a conflict-dominated depiction of Israel, the Israeli practitioners are trying to introduce, with the Israeli external communication, these missing stories, which are, for the Israeli side, at least as much priorities such as stories about the conflict. A member of the Israeli GPO's social media team explains: "What the message is behind it is that many if not all of the foreign journalists are coming to Israel because of the conflict. We can't really blame them. This is the main maker or news, this is the main source of interest, this is what sell newspapers or commercials in the TV. We understand that. We don't criticize that. But on the same time, we wish to introduce to the journalists the other side of Israel. We don't tell them to ignore the conflict. Nobody expects them to do that. But we do want to say, if you're stationed here and you have a work visa in Israel and you are supported by us and by others and we try to assist in many ways for

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13   External communication of the government can help to improve and safeguard one's economic relations and status like commercials do in marketing and campaigning.

14   While a clear majority of practitioners (including experts commenting in the Israeli press, regardless whether they are rather liberal or rather conservative) agrees that the external communication of the Israeli government and its branches should not focus on the conflict but on Israel's positive sides, there is less agreement on the question to which extent Israel should refer to the conflict at all. A majority argues that the conflict is still strongly associated with Israel and that this makes it necessary not to abstain completely from references to the conflict, as it would also not be credible to be silent about the topic completely. These references should, however, be used not more than absolutely necessary (This also offers an explanation for why, even though the detected share of shaming posts is low in the Israeli external communication, still some posts referring to the conflict and using shaming could be identified in the content analyses). Some voices, in contrast, recommend to refer to the conflict even less and a minority of voices worries that the Israeli external communication has become "too soft" in the meanwhile (cf. also the positions in the discussion in the workshop on the topic of "Winning the Battle of the Narrative" during the 2010 Herzliya Conference, in which representatives from Israeli governmental organizations as well as representatives from NGOs took part (Michlin 2010: 3f.; Landman 2010: 57f.)).

you to do your job, we also humbly suggest that you would cover civilian fields, like economy, culture" (Isr GPO1: 34).[15]

Highlighting economic, social and cultural achievements, in contrast, allows the Israeli side to shift the attention to issues linked to its economic & financial and social/institutional interests, which matter greatly to the Israeli side and that are, as shown in section 6.1.2., for the Israeli side at least equally important. Adding these missing stories about the Israeli economic, cultural and human achievements, consequently, is the core task of the external communication of the different branches of the Israeli government which engage in external communication. Consequently, for example, the Government Press Office defines "to find stories about Israel innovations, Israel in new art shows. Everything that portray Israel in the way that the foreign media doesn't recognize. You know, something else about Israel. Something the world doesn't know about Israel. That's my main mantra" (Isr GPO2: 96) as its core task and aims to show "Israel in full image" (Isr GPO1: 34) (these words are even used as the slogan for the GPO).[16] And even the IDF spokesperson's unit, which represents the military branch of Israel and that, therefore, is persistently confronted with the conflict, does not perceive it as the purpose of its external communication to focus exclusively on the conflict in its external communication but to add "a [missing] piece of the puzzle, which is important to understand Israel" (Isr IDF: 157). Especially when there are no major combat activities the unit perceives reporting about the conflict not even as a priority (Isr IDF: 40), instead showcasing its professionalism, innovations, technology and diversity and the achievements of Israel as a start-up nation (Isr IDF: 16ff.).

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15   Similarly, also a high-ranking member of the IDF spokesperson's unit describes the reporting of the international media as incomplete and therefore even "misleading". Consequently, he identifies the need to thematize topics beyond the conflict, such as the Israeli achievements, to add these for them important missing aspect: "But definitely our message to the world is not just about the conflict with Hamas or with the Palestinians. It's much more about what is Israel because people have a misleading view about what Israel is all about" (Isr IDF: 37)." "The problem with the international media here dealing mostly with the hardcore [(i.e., conflict-/war-related) content], is that they miss out on a piece of the puzzle, which is important to understand Israel" (Isr IDF: 157). Similarly, also the spokesperson's unit of COGAT, the Israeli Coordination of Government Activities in the (Palestinian) Territories, sees a lack of reports about the positive aspects of its work that it wants to fill with its external communication on the social media: "And I think, and it is not for propaganda, I really think as a spokesperson that it is very difficult to show the good things. And as you might know, in communication it is all the time the bad things and not the good things that are highlighted. But the good things – or if you can call them the good things – if you want to show the daily life, the real daily life that happens in Judea and Samaria, you can see that it is not making a lot of place in the communication – unfortunately" (Isr COGAT: 4).

16   The GPO logo can be viewed using the following link: http://gpoeng.gov.il/images/laam-en-l .png (accessed on 20.11.2017).

Focusing predominantly on the conflict, however, does not only take away the attention from Israeli achievements and, therefore, from important priorities of their external communication, it can actually undermine the promotion of such achievements and harm the Israeli image, as shifting the attention to the conflict unintendedly can also shift the attention to stigmata, events and practices that shed negative light on Israel and can be used to challenge the status quo (cf. also sections 7.1. and 7.3.).[17] Having the interest to defend its benefits and to conserve the status quo, consequently, it is strategically the best option for the Israeli side to side-line the conflict in its external communication and to normalize the conflict by downplaying its severity.

Indeed, such a mindset and practice of normalization & side-lining of the conflict as a strategic adaptation can be observed for the Israeli practitioners. In the following particularly illustrative example, for example, a staff member of the Israeli Government Press Office goes as far as to joke about the fact that reporting from Israel offers journalists the chance to report about a conflict, whilst enjoying a comfortable and safe life at the same time: "When there's conflict here, so that number of about 700 employees in foreign media, triples. Sometimes even more. So that's the reality on the ground. So of course, if conflict is here I would be … I have great respect for those that put themselves in danger but most of the time they're sitting on the beach. Or sitting in coffee shops, eating, meeting in the luxury of a western developed state in the Middle East. In the beginning of March there's hardly any rain and it's quite pleasant outside. […] It's not that bad. So, you understand, from their perspective, if they can cover the conflict in the luxury of a western standard … First of all, from their perspective, they are in the conflict. From the news organizations, they are one of the most difficult places to cover.

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17 From the point of view of the experience of the Israeli practitioners, reports about the conflict tend to be linked to stigmata about Israel. A member of the Israeli Government Press Office, for example, argues: "with the materials we're spreading, we're not trying to shame the opponent. That's not the purpose. The purpose of putting stories about Israeli beyond the conflict [is that ~~because~~] there are a lot of stigmas against Israel. If you ask someone from, I don't know, Illinois, Chicago, but what do you think about Israel? They think, you know, desert, camels, war zone. But no, we're one of the most successful high-tech countries and it's not only war here. And we want people to know Israel is different. So, we, you know, once a year we have a very big gay parade in Tel Aviv. So, we send our correspondence over there and we did a big story and, also, we did it with the social media and sponsored stories because, you know, with the images, sometimes like, Israeli is like Iran. We are religious, and we kill the gays, you know, throw them out of the roof of buildings like Iraq, but no. We're a very open society. More open than the United States. And people don't know about it because the thing [~~is~~] they know about Israel is what they hear in the news. And what they hear in the news. I don't blame the journalists because that's interesting. War is interesting. War always has more ratings than peace. And this is why we have to make the effort to put stories that are not what they used to get about Israel" (Isr GPO2: 47f.).

And third of all, there's always a chance of the outbreak of violence that they'd have to cover as well. So, there's this luxury of covering a main story, which is talked about almost daily across the world. You're relevant for your news organization for your own name. And the story on the table is the issue of conflict. [~~And that has absolutely no …~~] When you look at the state of the world, there are places which are much more important to cover, too. Definitely [~~there's …~~] we're overreported in a way that undermines and judges Israel to a different standard than anywhere else in the world" (Isr GPO2: 167-173). The strong focus of the international media on the conflict tends to shift attention to stigmata, events and practices that shed negative light on Israel. Consequently, from the perspective of the practitioners, it is necessary to counter this by choosing a "beyond conflict strategy" (Isr GPO2: 75), trying to sideline and normalize the conflict. Instead, it is perceived as crucial to "show that we [i.e., Israel] are not Satan [... but] a very liberal state, a very progressive state" (Isr GPO2: 75).[18]

Israel's normalization & side-lining efforts go as far as to try to frame itself as a Mediterranean country – not a country in the Middle East with all its political tensions and violent conflicts.[19] Thinking about economic success as well, e.g. in 2012 Ido Aharoni, then Consul General of Israel to New York, argued that it needs to be the ambition of the State of Israel to be compared rather with the Mediterranean Spain or the high-tech country Korea than with countries from the war-torn Middle East: "For many, many years we thought that our job was to convince the world that we were right and our adversaries were wrong. That's an important thing to do. But there is a new thing today, in the age of the internet. It's called the Power of Attraction. If you're not attractive, it becomes very difficult for you to be competitive. Traditionally, we thought of Jerusalem as a city in competition with Cairo. Jerusalem's competition should not be Cairo. It should be Paris. Tel Aviv's competition should be Barcelona. Israel's competition should not be Syria or Lebanon or Jordan. Israel's competition should be Spain or Korea. And that's the new mindset that we need to introduce to the conversation" (Ido Aharoni in Knowledge@Wharton 01.03.2012). According to Aharoni, an image of Israel focusing exclusively on the conflict is harmful from the point of view of its interests. Instead, Israel should promote a more positive and comprehensive image: "Israel's international image

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18   While the "beyond the conflict strategy" is perceived and experienced as the most efficient strategy of external communication for the Israeli side by the Israeli practitioners, they also acknowledge the limitations of their efforts. Their efforts can only be "a drop in the sea" and "only change [the] opinion of a few" (Isr GPO2: 75, 79), if Israeli policies arouse negative attention. Changing the "world's public view about Israel" is not exclusively a task of the practitioners working on Israel's external communication but also "the job of the politicians" (Isr GPO2: 83) (cf. also the recommendations in section 9.4.3.).

19   Similarly, often the framing that many Israelis feel "culturally European" is used (cf. e.g. Schneider 2014: 4).

does not serve its interests. This means that Israel should accentuate in deeds, and not just in words, that it is a place that is dynamic and full of energy, whose pulse relies on creativity and initiative" (Ido Aharoni in Globes 21.07.2010).

6.1.4   Branding and shaming as strategies for conserving and challenging

The characteristics described in the last section which are relevant for the conflict parties for adapting their external communication according to their interests as shaped by the asymmetric conflict structure are characteristics that are best provided by those strategies of external communication that have been defined in chapter 2 as "branding" respectively as "shaming":

Pictures and stories of the conflict are attractive for shaming (cf. section 2.2.1.). Shaming allows the Palestinian side, therefore, to focus on their single most important topic with ease. Using shaming enables the Palestinian conflict parties to feature (alleged) Israeli misdeeds and in this way question the status quo, encouraging interventions by appealing to the moral and normative responsibility of the international community and illustrating the severity and uniqueness of the conflict.

Branding, i.e., positive self-depiction, in contrast, allows the Israeli side to feature and promote its strengths and achievements and this way to foster its economic relations and its social/institutional status. As branding does not require any reference to the conflict and typically also does not use such references, it, furthermore, helps to sideline & normalize the conflict and thus shift the attention away from stigmata, events and practices that would shed negative light on Israel and could be used to challenge the status quo.

As shaming is consequently the ideal strategy for the Palestinian conflict parties and branding is the ideal strategy for the Israeli side from the point of view of their interests, it can be expected that the Palestinian external communication is dominated by shaming and the Israeli external communication by branding. Indeed, as shown previously in chapter 5, this is the case for the external communication of the conflict parties in the conflict in Israel and Palestine: The external communication of Hamas, as well as the external communication of the PLO & the PNA, are strongly dominated by shaming, while the external communication of the Israeli authorities is strongly dominated by branding.

6.2   Detailed example: Interests resulting from the distribution of economic & financial capabilities

Having demonstrated in section 6.1. how the distribution of capabilities in general shapes the interests of the conflict parties and in this way also the selection of ex-

ternal communication strategies, to provide additional evidence, as well as a more profound understanding of the prioritization pathway and its implications the following section shows that the elements of the prioritization pathway can also be observed when specifically examining the impact of the distribution of economic & financial capabilities on the interests and selection of external communication strategies by the conflict parties (cf. visual overview in figure 17):

Figure 17: Overview – The prioritization pathway – Interests resulting from the distribution of economic & financial capabilities

The Israeli side has a lot of economic & financial capabilities (cf. section 4.1.2.2.). Consequently, it profits from the benefit of economic wealth (section 6.2.1.). This benefit is greatly appreciated, and, for this reason, Israel has a strong interest in defending it to avoid running the risk of losing it (section 6.2.2.). The perception of instability, however, has the potential to harm Israel's economic relations. Promoting its strengths, in contrast, can help Israel foster its economic relations. Thus, the Israeli side avoids references that might undermine its efforts by conveying the impression of instability, such as frequent references to the conflict in its external communication, and instead makes promoting its economic strengths a priority for its external communication (section 6.2.3.). As branding is

the strategy of external communication that is most suitable to showcase and promote, safeguard and foster Israel's not conflict-related strengths (section 6.2.4.), the Israeli side chooses a branding-dominated strategy of external communication (as already shown in chapter 5).

The Palestinian side, in contrast, only has few economic & financial capabilities (cf. section 4.1.2.2.). Consequently, it suffers from a comparatively poor economic situation (section 6.2.1.). This contributes to a strong dissatisfaction on the Palestinian side with the status quo of the conflict. Challenging the status quo (section 6.2.2.) is, therefore, the single number one priority for their external communication. Not having a lot to lose, the Palestinian conflict parties also do not need to care about conveying the impression of instability, which means they can refer to the conflict frequently. Quite the opposite, they use the economic vulnerability of the topdog in order to harm them (section 6.2.3.). As shaming is the strategy of external communication that is most suitable to challenge the status quo, to focus on the conflict and attacking the opponent, the Palestinian side chooses a shaming-dominated strategy of external communication (section 6.2.4.).

6.2.1   Benefits & disadvantages

Having many economic & financial capabilities, the Israeli side profits from economic wealth. Having only few economic & financial capabilities, in contrast, the Palestinian side suffers from comparatively poor economic conditions:

Benefits for the Israeli side

Earlier in section 4.1.2.2. it was shown that the Israeli side has a lot of economic & financial capabilities, much more so than the Palestinian side, and, therefore, has a stronger economy and more comprehensive trade and investment relationships. This enables the State of Israel to profit from considerable wealth. This economic strength is not only a source to fund military capabilities but also a source of prestige and comfort. The status of living in Israel is high (UNDP 2016) and the unemployment rates in Israel are very low (OECD 2018b).

Disadvantages for the Palestinian side

The Palestinian side, in contrast, only has comparatively few economic & financial capabilities. Its economy is much weaker and more fragile than the Israeli economy. Restrictions on the movement of people and goods, as well as the destruction of infrastructure in the course of the conflict, have hampered economic development in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip in particular, the establishment of

international trade relations has also been hindered.[20] The unemployment rates in the Palestinian territories, especially in the Gaza Strip, are high[21] and the standard of living is much lower than on the Israeli side (UNDP 2016). The situation in the Gaza Strip has often even been described as a "humanitarian crisis" (e.g. UN News 15.02.2019).

6.2.2   (Dis)satisfaction with the status quo and vulnerabilities

The Israeli side is comparatively satisfied with the status quo and has the desire to keep its wealth. This means, however, also that it has something to lose and that it is vulnerable to a potential impression of instability. The Palestinian side, in contrast, has the strong desire to overcome the status quo and, having little to lose, does not need to take care of a potential impression of instability:

Satisfaction of the Israeli side with the status quo and vulnerability to the impression of instability

The economic wealth is a benefit neither the political leadership nor the population of the State of Israel want to lose. Having achieved a high socio-economic standard, there is also a strong domestic pressure to maintain or even to expand the privilege of economic wealth and a high standard of living. Indeed, welfare-related debates during the last years proved to be one of the most vehement and efficient sources of domestic opposition in Israel, going so far as to ensure that securing economic wealth for the population is a topic the Israeli government cannot ignore. Most notably, in 2011, about 430,000 people protested for more social justice (a notable number of people considering that the total population of the country was estimated to be about 7.8 million people in 2011 (World Bank 2018e)). According to polls, the movement had the support of 90% of the population (Guardian 04.09.2011). While the socio-economic conditions in the West Bank, and especially in the Gaza Strip, are by far worse than in Israel, the higher already existing level of prosperity on the Israeli side also leads to higher domestic expectations and means that the Israeli side has more to lose economically than the Palestinian side. Additionally, being the topdog, it is also much more difficult for the Israeli side to excuse economic problems by referring to obstacles resulting from the conflict than for the Palestinian side.

Having something to lose and the desire not to deteriorate their own socio-economic situation, however, also makes Israel vulnerable. Especially, (perceived) instability can be very harmful to the Israeli economy. Scholars have, for example,

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20   CIA World Factbook (04.06.2018): Country Report West Bank; CIA World Factbook (03.12.2018): Country Report Gaza Strip; World Bank 2013.

21   CIA World Factbook (04.06.2018): Country Report West Bank.

shown the harmful effects of the (perceived) instability, the perception of violence and the conflict for the investment in Israel (Anthony et al. 2015: 20; Fielding 2000: 23f.) and the Israeli trade relations (Didier 2017) (this complies well with the theoretical expectations from scholars such as Cliff 2012; Amodio & Di Maio 2018; Eckstein & Tsiddon 2004; Tabassam et al. 2016: 327; Alesina et al. 1996 and Veiga & Aisen 2011 that were quoted also in chapter 3). Especially, the Israeli tourism sector is sensitive to perceived instability, as a high level of perceived instability and insecurity tends to frighten away tourists. Reports about terror attacks or the fighting during particularly intense stages, such as the war in Gaza in summer 2014, in the news, have led to cancelations and decreased visitor numbers in Israel because tourists felt too unsafe (Financial Times 26.11.2014; Times of Israel 29.09.2014, Haaretz 11.05.2018; Simonovic 2012).

Dissatisfaction of the Palestinian side with the status and low vulnerability

On the Palestinian side, in contrast, the economic disadvantages (described in section 6.2.1.) contribute to a high level of dissatisfaction and to fueling a strong desire to overcome the status quo within both the Palestinian leadership and the Palestinian population (Bocco et al. 2002: esp. pp. 3, 1 & 2).[22] The economic problems are, however, not perceived as an independent problem but as a consequence of the conflict, the Israeli occupation and the blockade policies.[23] A termination of the Israeli occupation and blockade policies is perceived as necessary for overcoming central economic problems (cf. e.g. UNCTAD 12.09.2017; General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific 22.05.2019). Consequently, for the Palestinian side, the conflict and challenging the status remain the single most important priority and the economic situation is perceived as another implication of the conflict rather than an issue of its own, which, however, does provide a strong additional motivation.

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22   Opinion polls show a high level of dissatisfaction with the current domestic conditions within the Palestinian population, too, and that the population especially blames Israel for this (PSR 2019: 5f.). A 2018 survey of the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR) shows that among the different problems the economic situation is perceived as one of the most pressuring topics by the Palestinian population. According to the survey, 26% of the Palestinians think that "poverty and unemployment" is the most serious problem confronting the Palestinian society. Only one other topic, the "continuation of occupation and settlement activities", was mentioned more often (28%), showing that the bad conditions are perceived to be linked closely to the conflict environment (PSR 2018: 10). Polls from previous years show the same tendency (PSR 2017: 5f.).

23   According to a 2019 survey of the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR) Israel is blamed by a majority within the Palestinian population for the bad domestic conditions in the Palestinian territories (PSR 2019: 5f.).

Already suffering economically from the implications of the conflict at the same time, however, means that the Palestinian conflict parties, in contrast to the Israeli side, have comparatively little to lose. Therefore, they also need to worry less about the negative consequences of a perception of instability. This makes the Palestinian side less vulnerable than the Israeli side.

6.2.3   Adapting the external communication to economic & financial interests

Having the strong interest to keep its economic wealth and being vulnerable to the impression of instability, the Israeli side avoids references to the conflict, instead promoting its economic strengths. Having a strong desire to overcome the status quo, the Palestinian side, in contrast, uses the Israeli vulnerability as a point of vantage:

Israel – Featuring the own (economic) attractiveness, avoiding the impression of instability

As losing economic privileges is one of the biggest potential sources of domestic criticism, it is can be expected, from a strategic point of view, that the Israeli government sees its external communication efforts as a tool to also safeguard and foster its economic interests and that the government aims to avoid using a strategy of external communication that might have the potential to harm these interests.

Indeed, Israeli practitioners perceive it as problematic for the Israeli business interests, when Israel is only associated with conflict and war, as the following assessment from the Brand Israel project, a marketing research project that has strongly influenced the Israeli public diplomacy, for example, shows: "Americans don't see Israel as being like the US [...] [they] know a lot about Israel, just not the right things. They think of Israel as a grim, war-torn country, not one booming with high-tech and busy outdoor cafes. That doesn't mean that Americans are anti-Israel or pro-Palestinian. They just find Israel to be totally irrelevant to their lives, and they are tuning out" (ISRAEL21c 20.01.2005; Griffin 2013: 26). Focusing predominantly on conflict and war shifts the attention to negative connotations such as instability, insecurity and violence and away from stories of economic success such as, for instance, the aforementioned example of the Israeli high-tech industry.

Consequently, using too many references to the conflict is perceived by the Israeli practitioners as counterproductive. Ido Aharoni, the then Consul for Media and Public Affairs at the Consulate General of Israel in New York, e.g. warned in 2001 to contribute to an impression of Israel as a war-torn country by spreading images of the conflict in Israel and Palestine (as it is often the case when using shaming): "Too many people associate Israel in the context of the broader Arab Israel conflict. Pro-Israel advocates (including the government of Israel) are partially

responsible for this association, because for far too long, that is the impression we have projected to the outside world. This is not to say that the threats facing Israel should be understated: from Palestinian and Hezbollah terrorism, a nuclear Iran and the increasing attacks on Israel's legitimacy [...] However, we must broaden the narrative to highlight Israel's attractive dimensions, such as its latest high-tech innovations, medical breakthroughs and the dynamic art and cultural scenes in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem" (Aharoni in Times of Israel 03.06.2012 and Griffin 2013: 27).[24]

Particularly strong are the harmful implications of negative connotations such as instability and insecurity for the tourism sector. Indeed, these considerations are also present among the Israeli practitioners. In 2013, for example, Oren Drori, the then head of the media team of the Ministry of Tourism, criticized the abundant use of the term "Israel under fire" during the clashes in 2012 arguing "that the term had caused serious and potentially long lasting damage to Israeli Tourism, effects that may continue to be felt for many months to come" (Tourism Review News 20.05.2013).

In contrast, it is perceived as crucial by the Israeli practitioners to feature Israel's (economic) attractiveness in its external communication, as this offers a big chance to safeguard, foster and even enhance Israel's economic status. Nation-branding campaigns promoting a positive national image have the potential „to increase foreign direct investments, boost tourism and elevate a nation's diplomatic standing" (Jerusalem Post 06.12.2015). Following the same logic, whilst acknowledging that is hard to ignore the conflict completely and a certain extent of crisis management is needed, Israeli communication experts on the 2010 Herzyla Conference, for example, argued that focusing on the conflict[25] and exercising only crisis management would lead to Israel missing valuable economic opportunities: "In that communication strategy, ignoring the conflict is not an option, but today, Israel deals exclusively with crisis management and that alone is no solution. It certainly has to have a rapid response team to manage the conflict, but it also

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24   Practitioners on the Palestinian side have observed that the Israeli side rather tends to avoid referring too much to the conflict for economic and social/institutional reasons, too: "I think it's about developing better relations around the world for economic reasons, and political reasons. And three, I think they want to distract... They focus on Iran, right? They focus on other things. They don't focus on us" (PLO MA: 129).

25   In 2008, Ido Aharoni, then Head of the Brand Management Team of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, pointed out that it is not even necessary to make the target audience abroad completely forget about the conflict to be successful with branding: "You can disagree with our policies yet go to watch an Israeli film or invest in an Israeli company traded on NAS-DAQ". Branding for him does not work by changing the political news, but by diversifying the overall message. "It is a decision to communicate this [broader] reality--one that we believe is attractive, vibrant and relevant--in order to give a wider perspective of what Israel is" (Moment Magazine 2008).

needs to find niche markets and use the internet to push its products – whether it is a place, a concept or a person. By doing so, it will create a holistic personality for itself. By making it more viable, this will not only improve Israel's image but also its economy" (Landman 2010: 58).

Palestine – Using the Israeli vulnerability as a point of vantage to challenge the status quo

Having much less to lose than the Israeli side economically, the Palestinian side, in contrast, does not need to be as careful with referring to the conflict as the Israeli side. As the conflict and challenging the status quo is their single most important priority, the Palestinian conflict parties, consequently, do not shy away from referring to the conflict and its negative implications for the Palestinian side a lot. Quite the opposite, the Israeli vulnerability and the impression of instability, which is so harmful to its economic interests, can be (and is!) used by the Palestinian conflict parties as a point of vantage for harming and pressurizing their opponent. Hamas, for example, does not only focus on the conflict in their external communication, they even complement their shaming-dominated strategy by regular calls to support the BDS movement and its actions, calling to the public to boycott, divest and sanction the State of Israel.[26] [27]

6.2.4   Branding and shaming as strategies for conserving and challenging

The last section has described the characteristics that are most relevant for the conflict parties to adapt their external communication to best suit their interests, which are shaped by the asymmetric distribution of economic & financial capabilities. These characteristics are characteristics that are best provided by those external communication strategies that have been defined in chapter 2 as "branding" and "shaming":

Pictures and stories of the conflict are particularly attractive for shaming (cf. section 2.2.1.). If this option is available, shaming, therefore, typically refers to a conflict as a reference theme. When focusing on the conflict, however, Israel might run the risk of shifting the attention to negative connotations, such as instability, insecurity and violence, meaning also that the focus would be drawn away from stories of economic success. This could, ultimately, have the potential to harm the country's economic relations. Consequently, it can be expected that Israel does not

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26   Cf. e.g. on the English-speaking Twitter Channel of the Palestinian Information Center: https ://twitter.com/palinfoen/status/1087441104323125248 (accessed: 30.06.2019).

27   The PLO & the PNA, in contrast to Hamas, typically do not refer to BDS, as a formal support for BDS could be interpreted as a breach of the agreements in the Oslo Accords (Pal UK: 144, 146).

use shaming abundantly. Branding, in contrast, allows Israel to promote its economic strength. Consequently, Israel can be expected to use branding amply.

The Palestinian side, in contrast, having less to lose, is not vulnerable to an impression of instability and, therefore, does not need to shy away from using shaming for featuring the conflict as their single most important priority and as the strategy most suitable to challenging the dissatisfying status quo. Furthermore, shaming can be well used to provide justifications for calling for boycotting, divesting from and sanctioning Israel.

As shaming is, consequently, the ideal strategy for the Palestinian conflict parties and branding is the ideal strategy for the Israeli side from the point of view of their interests, it can be expected that the Palestinian external communication is dominated by shaming and the Israeli external communication by branding. Indeed, as is already shown in chapter 5, this is the case for the external communication of the conflict parties in the conflict in Israel and Palestine: The external communication of Hamas, as well as the PLO & the PNA, is strongly dominated by shaming and regularly references to BDS can be found on several of their channels. The external communication of the Israeli authorities, in contrast, is strongly dominated by branding and the Israeli channels frequently promote the country's economic attractiveness.

6.3   Detailed example: Interests resulting from the distribution of social/institutional capabilities

Section 6.1. has demonstrated how the distribution of capabilities generally shapes the interests of the conflict parties and in this way also the selection of external communication strategies and section 6.2. has illustrated the impact of the distribution of economic & financial capabilities in further detail. In order to provide additional evidence and a more profound understanding of the prioritization pathway and its implications the following section now shall show that the elements of the prioritization pathway can also be observed when specifically examining the impact of the distribution of social/institutional capabilities (cf. visual overview in figure 18):

The Israeli side has a lot of social/institutional capabilities (cf. section 4.1.2.3.). Consequently, it profits from the impression of being a reliable, stable partner, this image offers a valuable justification for supporting Israel (section 6.3.1.). Indeed, Israel profits from large aid payments and does not want to lose this support. They have a strong interest in keeping these payments and the social/institutional status which makes it possible to justify them (section 6.3.2.). The impression of being a reliable, stable partner, however, can be undermined by the impression of instability or the raise of doubts about their integrity. Thus, the Israeli side avoids refer-

ences that might undermine its efforts by conveying the impression of instability or shifting the attention to incidents that could be interpreted as non-compliance with international norms, such as frequent references to the conflict in its external communication, and instead makes promoting its social/institutional relations a priority for its external communication (section 6.3.3.). As branding is the strategy of external communication that is most suitable to showcase and, in this way promote, safeguard and foster Israel's not conflict-related strengths, the Israeli side chooses a branding-dominated strategy of external communication (section 6.3.4., cf. also the results presented in chapter 5).

Figure 18: Overview – The prioritization pathway – Interests resulting from the distribution of social/institutional capabilities
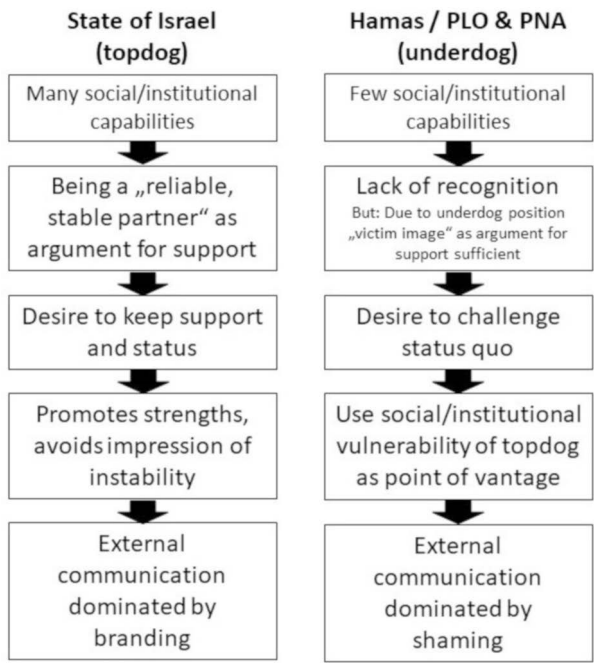
The Palestinian side, in contrast, has few social/institutional capabilities (cf. section 4.1.2.3.). Consequently, they suffer from a lack of international recognition (section 6.3.1.). This contributes to the strong dissatisfaction of the Palestinian side with the status quo of the conflict. Challenging the status quo (section 6.3.2.) is, therefore, the single number one priority for their external communication. As, being the underdog, the Palestinian side does not rely on the impression of being a

stable, reliable partner as justification for support, the Palestinian conflict parties do not need to care about conveying the impression of instability, when referring frequently to the conflict. Quite the opposite, they try to use the vulnerability of the social/institutional status of the Israeli side in order to harm their opponent (section 6.3.3.). As shaming is the strategy of external communication that is most suitable to challenge the status quo and to focus on the conflict, the Palestinian side chooses a shaming-dominated strategy of external communication (section 6.3.4., cf. also the results presented in chapter 5).

6.3.1   Benefits & disadvantages and (dis)satisfaction with the status quo

Looking specifically at the social/institutional dimension of the conflict, it was shown in section 4.1.2.3. that the Israeli side has a lot of social/institutional capabilities, much more so than the Palestinian side. This gives the State of Israel a high social status in the international community. Unlike the Palestinian actors, the State of Israel is fully acknowledged as a state by the most influential nations and is a full member of the international community. This high status entails certain obligations and expectations, as well as some attractive benefits, such as the principle of sovereignty of each full member of the international community, valuable strategic, diplomatic and political international relations and cooperation and the principle of non-interference in domestic affairs.[28] Possibly one of the most important benefits for the State of Israel resulting from its high social/institutional status, however, might be that from the high status comparatively strong justifications for supporting Israel despite (or even because of) its topdog role can be drawn:

Both the Israeli side and the Palestinian side profit significantly from foreign aid:

According to data of the World Bank, in 2016, the West Bank and Gaza received 2.402 billion US dollars of official development assistance and official aid in total,[29] a significant amount of the total GDP of the West Bank and Gaza (in 2016: 13.426 billion US dollars[30]). In 2009, the Palestinian Authorities even profited from 2.828

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28   Cf. Article 2.4 of the Charter of the United Nations (United Nations 1945).
29   Net official development assistance and official aid, according to the World Bank national accounts data, calculated in current US dollars (World Bank 2018c).
30   According to the World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files, calculated in current US dollars (World Bank 2018a).

billion US dollars.[31] In per-capita terms that means that the Palestinian Authorities received 527.68 US dollars per capita of official development assistance. [32]

However, Israel receives a high amount of foreign aid, too: For example, they receive more than three billion US dollars of direct foreign assistance from the US government each year (USAID Greenbook 2016: 19). This is more than the total sum of official development assistance and official aid the West Bank and Gaza receive and equals about a fifth of the total US foreign-aid budget. In relation to the size of the Israeli population, this means the United States subsidize Israel with approximately 500 US dollars per capita, even though Israel is a relatively wealthy industrial country with a per capita income similar to that of South Korea or Spain (Mearsheimer & Walt 2006: 31). From 1946 until 2016 the USA paid in total more than 125 billion US dollars of direct foreign aid to Israel (USAID Greenbook 2016: 19). Additionally, Israel received several billion US dollars of funds for its missile defense systems (Aljazeera 08.03.2018). Moreover, Israel has also received support from other countries. Germany, for example, subsidized Israel's purchase of three modern submarines (Spiegel Online 23.10.2017). Besides financial support, the State of Israel has profited from massive diplomatic support from Western governments, especially from the United States; the USA has frequently used its veto right in the UN Security Council in favor of Israel (Mearsheimer & Walt 2006: 31f.).

Such large amounts of foreign aid and diplomatic support, however, need to be justified toward the domestic population of the donor countries.[33] Justifying aid to the Palestinian side is comparatively easy. As the Palestinian side is the underdog and it is comparatively poor, the aid can be framed as humanitarian support or development aid and, in order to create empathy, the Palestinians can be framed as victims (cf. also section 7.1.). This type of argumentation, however, does not work for the powerful and rich State of Israel. Instead, however, Israel's many social/institutional capabilities make it possible for its allies to use another type of argumentation to justify their aid to the State of Israel: As Israel has stable state structures and is a recognized member of the international community, it is possible to frame Israel as an important and reliable (strategic) partner for stability

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31   Net official development assistance and official aid, according to the World Bank national accounts data, calculated in current US dollars (World Bank 2018c).

32   Net official development assistance and official aid, according to the World Bank national accounts data, calculated in current US dollars (World Bank 2018d).

33   Indeed, supporting a comparatively rich country like Israel has not been uncontested in the United States. Within the IR (International Relations) scholarship a prominent criticism was formulated e.g. by Mearsheimer & Walt (2006). And within press reports the question of the necessity of the support was raised as well (e.g. Atlantic 15.09.2016). According to polls especially among parts of the Democrat electorate the support is far from uncontested (Atlantic 15.09.2016).

in the region (cf. also Mearsheimer & Walt 2006: 32ff).[34] Additionally, referencing shared values, i.e., the values of the international community and the West, is often used to further strengthen the justification as to why Israel should be supported.[35] This makes being perceived as reliable and stable crucial to the State of Israel for justifying support to it.

6.3.2   (Dis)satisfaction with the status quo and vulnerabilities

Profiting from such high amounts of aid, the Israeli side has a strong interest in both keeping these support payments and maintaining its social/institutional status from which particularly strong justifications for such a support can be derived. The high social/institutional status of the State of Israel and the advantageous argumentations deriving from it are also vulnerable, however. On the one hand, the reference to shared values can be undermined by raising doubts about the compliance of the Israeli side with international norms (for the theoretical argument cf. also Daase 1999: 236ff.).[36] On the other hand, the framing of being a stable partner and, therefore, a strategic asset can be undermined by the impression of instability and inability of Israel to exert its monopoly on violence as one of the core features of statehood (for the theoretical argument cf. also Daase 1999: 228ff.).[37] The Pales-

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34   The American-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), one of the most influential Pro-Israeli advocacy groups in the United States, for example, argued on their website that "The United States and Israel have formed a unique partnership to meet the growing strategic threats in the Middle East. […] This cooperative effort provides significant benefits for both the United States and Israel" (quoted by Mearsheimer & Walt 2006: 32). Nowadays – updated to the current security challenges – the lobby group presents Israel as an asset for the USA in the fight against terrorism (AIPAC 2019a). A very similar wording was also used in the press release of the US State Department on the Ten-Year Memorandum of Understanding between the United States and Israel, which calls Israel "a valuable and capable ally" (US Department of State 01.10.2018). Zunes (1996) notes that in general a majority of the US foreign policy elites has tended to emphasize the "stabilizing role" of Israel.

35   On its website the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), for example, describes Israel as „a unique sanctuary of democracy, freedom and pluralism in the Middle East, protecting its citizens' rights while upholding the core values it shares with America" (AIPAC 2019b). A similar language can be found also in the EU-Israeli relations. For example, the EU states as its motivation for the 2005 EU-Israel Action Plan that the initiative is „based on shared common values of democracy, respect for human rights, the rule of law and basic freedoms" (European Commission 2019).

36   Indeed, raising doubts about the „shared values" by referring to (alleged or actual) human rights violations can be observed to be a core element of the argumentation of many criticisms of support to Israel. The former Palestinian Foreign Minister Nabil Sha'ath for example wrote in a contribution for Haaretz about „the EU's Fantasy of Shared Values" and referred to continuous human rights violation of the Israeli side (Haaretz 31.05.2018).

37   Indeed, some prominent criticism of aid to Israel justifies its position with raising doubts about whether Israel actually has the ability to be a strategic asset as an ally (e.g. prominently

tinian side, in contrast, is not vulnerable, as it does not rely on the argument of being a stable, reliable partner as justification for support, as, having much fewer capabilities and for being the underdog because of this, it can rely easily on other justifications, as explained above.

6.3.3   Avoiding sore points, taking care of privileges, using points of vantage

For the Israeli side being perceived as a reliable and stable partner and an actor with shared values is the biggest leverage for justifying others' support. Consequently, it can be expected that the Israeli side avoids references that might have the potential to undermine this impression in its external communication. Quite the opposite, it can be expected that the practitioners on the Israeli side choose content for their external communication that helps to secure the impression of being a stable, reliable partner that shares the values of the target audience.

The Israeli practitioners are, therefore, careful not to use references to the conflict too often, as the abundant use of corresponding references can quickly become a lose-lose option. David Patrikarakos, the author of the book "War in 140 Characters: How Social Media is Reshaping Conflict in the 21st Century", e.g. concludes from an interview with IDF spokesperson Peter Lerner: "Israel was and is damned: If it strikes Hamas targets embedded in civilian areas or among protesters marching toward its borders, it receives international condemnation, but if Hamas succeeds in kidnapping or killing any of its soldiers or civilians, Hamas wins again, by showing that Israel has 'lost' to a much weaker force – all played out on social media and in real time. It is a lose-lose situation" (aish.com / The Tablet 30.06.2018). If Israel presents itself as offensive, Israel is quickly perceived as an actor not complying with the norms and values of the international community. If, however, Israel presents itself as being harmed, this raises doubts about its ability to be a stable and strong partner. From the Israeli strategic perspective, therefore, permanent and abundant references to the conflict are harmful.

Quite the opposite, Israeli practitioners and communication experts perceive it to be necessary to use external communication to actively strengthen the perception of Israel as a reliable partner with shared values. Dan Illouz, member of the Jerusalem City Council with the Hitorerut movement party advocates for efforts to be associated with widely appreciated positive values instead of with the

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Mearsheimer & Walt 2006: 32ff.). Mearsheimer & Walt (2006: 32) even raise the question of whether Israel might be rather a strategic burden. An impression of a lack of control and instability despite massive support would play into the hands of this criticism and further increase corresponding doubts.

conflict, for example: "Unless we work to change Israel's branding[38] from 'occupation', 'apartheid' and 'war crimes', to relevant values such as 'hope', 'freedom' and 'justice', we will never be able to win the public diplomacy battle" (Times of Israel 23.07.2013). Similarly, researchers from Molad, an Israeli, politically center-left oriented think-tank see this strategic consideration reflected in the planning of the external communication of the Israeli government. Writing about the creation of the National Hasbara[39] Headquarters by the Israeli government they argue e.g.: "Its creation reflects a broad recognition of the importance of fortifying a positive image for Israel, maintaining its desirability, and promoting hasbara messaging that emphasizes cooperation and shared values" (Molad 2012: 26). Moreover, to emphasize common values Israel has also presented itself often as "only democracy in the Middle East" (e.g. Jerusalem Post 22.04.2017 about the strategy of external communication of the Israeli MFA; Jerusalem Post 06.12.2015; aish.com / The Tablet 30.06.2018). Similarly, referring to both shared values and the aspect of reliability and stability, the Pro-Israeli think tank "The Israel Project" in its "The Israel Project's 2009 GLOBAL LANGUAGE DICTIONARY" research, which was also said to have influenced many media and communication practitioners in the Israeli government (Independent 27.07.2014), recommends emphasizing that "Israel is America's one and only true ally in the region" and to argue that, therefore, "In these particularly unstable and dangerous times, Israel should not be forced to go it alone" (The Israel Project 2009: 67).

Unlike the Israeli side, the Palestinian side, being the weaker underdog, does not require to be perceived as stable or even like-minded to justify being supported, as it can present itself more easily credible as a suffering victim, due to their underdog position, and in this way easily generate empathy (cf. also section 7.1.). Quite the opposite, like the economic vulnerability, also this social/institutional vulnerability of the Israeli side can be used as a point of vantage by the Palestinian side. Especially shaming offers the Palestinian side the opportunity to pillory Israeli actions that are, or can be, perceived as breaches of the norms and values of the international community, such as human rights and the humanitarian law, and in this way raise doubts about Israel's self-characterization as an actor with shared values (cf. e.g. PLO MA: 99-101).

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38   In this context the term "branding", as it is used by Illouz, has a different meaning than the conceptualization of the term used in this study. In the context of the quote, branding describes a set of characteristics associated with Israel as a brand.

39   "Hasbara" can be translated roughly with the English term "explain". It is the Hebrew term for "external communication". Today the Israeli practitioners rather tend to prefer the term "public diplomacy" instead, as they consider the early Hasbara efforts as too defensive (Isr MFA2: 57, 48; cf. also Kretschmer 2017: 8; Gilboa 2006: 735).

6.3.4   Branding and shaming as strategies for conserving and challenging

The last section has described the characteristics that are most relevant for the conflict parties to adapt their external communication to best suit their interests, which are shaped by the asymmetric distribution of social/institutional capabilities. These characteristics are characteristics that are best provided by those external communication strategies that have been defined in chapter 2 as "branding" and "shaming":

Pictures and stories of the conflict are particularly attractive for shaming (cf. section 2.2.1.). If this option is available, shaming, therefore, typically refers to a conflict as a reference theme. As argued in the last section, however, permanent and abundant references to the conflict, as it is typical for shaming, are harmful, as they risk undermining that Israel is perceived as a reliable, stable partner with shared values. Branding, in contrast, helps Israel foster this impression.

The Palestinian side, in contrast, being not vulnerable and even profiting from being perceived as the weak victim, does not need to shy away from using shaming for featuring the conflict as their single most important priority. The shaming strategy is most suitable to challenge the, from the Palestinian perspective, dissatisfying status quo. Furthermore, shaming can be well used to present accusations against Israel, that (allegedly) show that Israel violates international norms and that, consequently, raise doubts about Israel's self-characterization as an actor with shared values.

As shaming is consequently the ideal strategy for the Palestinian conflict parties and branding is the ideal strategy for the Israeli side from the point of view of their social/institutional interests, it can be expected that the Palestinian external communication is dominated by shaming and the Israeli external communication by branding. Indeed, as it was shown already in chapter 5, this is the case for the external communication of the conflict parties in the conflict in Israel and Palestine: The external communication of Hamas, as well as the external communication of the PLO & the PNA, is strongly dominated by shaming and frequently features (alleged) Israeli norm violations. The external communication of the Israeli authorities, in contrast, is strongly dominated by branding and Israel frequently presents itself as a strong, reliable, stable partner with shared values.